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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002419

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER TU IZ

SUBJECT: IRAQ TRYING TO CHARM THE TURKS ON PKK

REF: BAGHDAD 2399

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Patricia Butenis for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) This is an action request. See paragraph 11.

¶2. (C) Summary: The Iraqi government's designated anti-PKK coordinator, State Minister Shirwan Wa'ili, met on July 16 with PolCouns and the Turkish DCM. Wa'ili said he has an action plan for dealing with the PKK, expressed interest in holding a substantive trilateral meeting on the PKK, and asked for input on the dates, participants and agenda for the meeting. Turkish DCM Ahmet Yazal reiterated longstanding Turkish demands for Government of Iraq (GOI) actions against the PKK, and said the Government of Turkey (GOT) would not meet with Wa'ili's deputy in the trilateral process, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Interior Minister Sinjari. PolCouns underlined that the PKK is a problem and that only a serious meeting could develop practical steps. Wa'ili accepted the comment but the TV cameras through much of the meeting indicated that Wa'ili had other agendas. End Summary.

Wa'ili Abruptly Convoked Meeting

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¶3. (S) State Minister Wa'ili abruptly convoked the July 16 meeting. Wa'ili planned to turn the meeting into a media event, with a press conference, an option both we and the Turkish Embassy rejected. The meeting followed a July 15 meeting of the GOI's Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS) (reftel). In that July 15 MCNS meeting, Iraqi FM Hoshyar Zebari announced that he had told Turkish FM Abdullah Gul that Iraq would host a trilateral meeting to discuss the PKK.

¶4. (C) In the July 16 meeting, with the cameras rolling, Wa'ili said rumors of Turkish troops entering northern Iraq are a "sensitive subject." Wa'ili said that the GOI welcomed the opportunity to discuss the PKK issue and said he had prepared an action plan to deal with the PKK.

Turkish DCM: PKK a National Security Issue

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¶5. (C) With the cameras finally off, Turkish DCM Yazal expressed hope the trilateral process would work and told Wa'ili that Refat Akgunay had replaced retired General Edip Baser (Wa'ili appeared unaware) and that Akgunay would soon contact Wa'ili. Yazal noted that the PKK seemed to get arms easily in Iraq. Turkish concern about the PKK is a national security issue, not an election issue, Yazal stressed. Turkey has presented Iraq with concrete steps it could take on the PKK and is awaiting a response, but Turkish patience is running out, stated Yazal.

¶6. (C) PolCouns pointed out that the U.S. has declared the PKK a terrorist organization. He praised Turkish patience to

date and said this patience was important. He urged that the governments convene a serious meeting that includes representatives from the KRG's Interior Ministry within the Iraqi delegation and that would convene to determine practical steps.

Turks Reject KRG Participation in Talks

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¶ 7. (C) DCM Yazal said that Turkey views the process as between the three envoys only, not as a four-way process. Turkey "does not believe in the sincerity of this fourth component." Wa'ili noted that Sinjari had met with Turkish officials on other occasions and had the best grasp on the Kurdish region. Yazal stood firm and said Turkey will not accept KRG participation absent some concrete step against the PKK. (After the meeting, Yazal told PolCouns that including Sinjari would look too much like negotiating with the PKK. PolCouns responded that if the Turkish Government wants changes on the ground in the KRG it has to deal with the KRG.)

¶ 8. (C) Wa'ili asked Yazal what type of step Turkey was looking for. Yazal said he had no instructions on this point, but suggested declaring the PKK a terrorist organization; preventing movement of PKK members into Turkey; extradition of PKK leaders for whom there are Interpol warrants; closure of PKK offices.

¶ 9. (C) Wa'ili claimed the GOI had implemented some of these steps. He claimed PKK offices in Iraq had been closed. Wa'ili said if the GOT could give the GOI information on any open PKK offices the GOI would close them. Wa'ili pointed out the difficulty of dealing with the PKK militarily: "we

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cannot even take care of our own terrorist organizations."

Comment

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¶ 10. (C) An ex-Baathist now converted to Shia Islamist, Wa'ili's ham-handed media effort almost certainly sought to boost his own profile within the fragmented Iraqi foreign policy/security policy apparatus. Wa'ili likely was smarting over Iraqi National Security Advisor Rubai'e having pre-empted Wa'ili's meeting with the Turkish ambassador earlier this week. In addition to struggling to implement security measures on the ground throughout Iraq, the Iraqi Government is grappling with developing its own security architecture and organizations. The PKK issue is one more example in a long list of maladroit foreign policies. On the positive side, the Shia Islamist element of the Iraqi government does seem to understand the need to act and they are the most powerful single element of the government.

¶ 11. (C) Post requests guidance from the Department on a date, venue, and participants for a followup meeting.

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